DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 812 IR 004 893

AUTHOR Curtis, Ron
TITLE Media Competency.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 8p.; For related document, see IR 004 892

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Activity Learning; *Change Strategies; Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Film Production; Films; Individualized Instruction; Instructional Innovation; *Instructional Systems; *Mass Media; *Media Technology; Propaganda; Radio; Radio Technology; Television; *Visual Literacy
IDENTIFIERS Media Now Project

ABSTRACT

The need to teach media competency in the schools in a systematic way has been largely unrecognized. The Media Now course of study provides an example of the type of instruction needed to teach the knowledge and skills necessary for informed media consumption and skilled media production. The course, which has been thoroughly tested and validated in the classroom, is built around performance objectives, learning by doing, and individualized instruction, and concentrates on the film, radio, and television media. (STS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED140812

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ron Curtis

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

MEDIA COMPETENCY

Ron Curtis

IR 004 893

The need for studying the mass media came with the technology that made mass communication possible. W. W. Charters, a researcher at Ohio State University, held it in highest priority as early as 1935. Fifty years ago Herbert Hoover saw the possibility of a lost potential in radio when he warned "it is utterly inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service to be drowned in advertising chatter."

There have been a number of organized attempts since then to "teach media competency."[1] Authors and critics like John Silberman, Ivan Illich, John Culkin, Marshall McLuhan, John Debes of the Visual Literacy movement have expounded and pushed the need before the educational establishment. There have been some isolated successes but compared to the overwhelming need, those successes are far from breathtaking.

Why?

A look back to a media education conference held at Andover, Massachusetts on November 3, 1969, helps to provide an answer. A number of insightful and important statements came from clinicians of that conference. But the most overlooked statement of the report was as follows:

> The absence of organized public and "political" recognition of the need for mass media study results in some hard uphill sledding. As a recent example, a sensitive, intelligently designed multi-media course for a single grade of 10-year-olds was finally adopted by a small minority of schools in "almost 100 school districts" of the 27 thousand in the U.S.--or less than 0.4 percent--after five years of testing.

---

[1] Media Competency: A basic skill which has to do with the ability to both recognize the impact upon the individual of the content and the form of communication media and to learn to use these in order to respond with feeling, individuality, and constructive concern to basic problems and issues in society.

> The reason was that this was a typical case of isolated entrepreneurial inspiration and effort, with no main body of support to certify and promote it. There is a need for the development of a formal and formidable teacher-education program...for the scientific design of woefully needed curricula at each social, economic, ethnic and learning-capacity level of public education...and for a campaign program of "Merchandising and Selling" to the public and (above all) the teaching profession.

The Andover attendees did, however, neglect to recognize the need for an organized course of study that includes a beginning compliment of the basic materials and resources for a broad approach to mass media study. The only way that visual literacy and the media study movement will make the kind of impact necessary to help our society cope with the effects of the mass media is to offer educators an organized and systematic approach, a discipline if you will, to aid them in their administrative, parental and pedagogic encounters. We are not suggesting a national curriculum but a national movement with the nucleus being an organized package of educational objectives, specific instruction for learners, and research and evaluation instrumentation that will document observed results and analysis of the program's effectiveness.

Nothing short of this will allow teachers and their students to get at the business of understanding the media.

One such approach to helping students cope with their susceptibility to the influence of the media is a course called Media Now. The mass persuaders of Film, Radio, TV, and Sound constitute the major course emphasis. An individualized design allows the course to be used as a semester or full year's course.

Built around the concepts of individualized instruction,

performance objectives, and learning by doing, the course has been thoroughly tested and validated in the classroom. The course includes fifty "learning packages", organized into seven modules which include: media hardware, production, genre, evaluation, interpretation, aesthetics and presentation.

The Media Now program deals with radio broadcasting, still and motion picture photography, script writing, film study, propaganda techniques, media terminology, and the classifying, analyzing and appreciation of media messages.

Such precise objectives as "the student will load a camera and take three still photographs which are properly exposed and in focus as determined by the instructor" help to give the students direction and at the same time provide for evaluation criterion useful on all levels. Both cognitive and affective learning outcomes are realized in the Media Now activities.

The aesthetics module contains objectives such as "you will demonstrate your ability to interpret an aesthetic message by identifying the artistic principles contained in the production."

In the evaluation module students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge of a number of critics interviewed on audio tape by writing essays in answer to questions contained in their lab manual.

There are over 600 such tasks contained in the modules and packages of the course.

These objectives coupled with instruction, written specifically to the students enable the individualized nature of the course to envolve.

People today are receivers of information, but many, especially students, want to be communicators as well as receivers. But in most cases, they do not know how to go about being a communicator.

Media Now opens the necessary channels!

It helps students recognize the power of the mass media and how to put it to work for society. When students see how a message is put together, how much work and discipline it takes, how creative one must be to make a good film, TV program, or radio spot--they begin to evaluate, interpret, analyze, and appreciate media forms and learn to communicate with and through them.

The course materials offer a new way for teachers to help students learn. The basic books and packages that make up the course provide the teacher with the material he or she needs to create an exciting new educational situation.

The TAß (Teacher Activity Book) is almost a course in itself. It suggests methods, techniques, time allotments, extra activities, resources, and evaluation for the busy teacher. It coordinates all the components and the learning packages.

The evaluation design was prepared by Dr. Howard Levie of Indiana University and Drs. Ray Manion and Bill Majure of the Southwest Iowa Learning Resources Center. The evaluation instrumentation involves standardized tests and original instrument design. The following media measurement instruments have been used for measuring student performance goals:

a. Self Concept Attitude scales
b. Attitude toward Media Study
c. School Sentiment scale
d. Attitude toward censorship

e. Attitude toward the Aesthetic value
f. Meier Art Judgment Test
g. Master Skills/Knowledge measure
h. Essay on Film

A summary of the results are as follows:

A. Media Now - Major Objectives

I. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will improve their knowledge of mass media terminology and techniques more (statistical significance of .05) than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.

II. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will demonstrate increased production abilities more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.

III. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will decrease (statistical significance of .05) their susceptibility to persuasion of the mass media more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.

IV. Objective: Students participating in Media Now will increase (.05 significance level) their positive attitudes toward media more than will a group of comparison students not participating in the program.

Six hundred twenty-three tasks are designed into the Media Now course, and are organized into a performance hierarchy of four levels. They are, in descending order, course objectives, module objectives, LAP objectives, and student involvements (or activities). Student involvements are presented in the student guide (SLAG), the LAPs, and a resource manual (SLAB).

B. Evidence of Effectiveness

Objective 1: Media Now Achievement

The Media Now course contributed to significant gains in achievement, thereby confirming the first objective.

Objective 2: Media Production

Media Now students produce more acceptable non-print media than a comparison group of control students.

Objective 3: Susceptibility to Persuasion

The Media Now course enabled experimental subjects to interpret persuasive messages with higher quality descriptions than a comparison of control students.

Objective 4: Attitudes Toward Media

Significant attitude changes were observed over the total scores for the posttest, experimental versus control comparisons, and the experimental group pretest and posttest comparisons. Inspection of the means indicates that attitudes toward media increased (positively) for the experimental group, thereby supporting the fourth objective.

C. Educational Significance

The research shows that the Media Now course of study provides students the knowledge and skills required for informed media consumption and skilled media production.

The research also indicates that an individualized approach to learning is an effective method of presenting course material in the study of mass media.